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Congresswoman Matsui Votes to Support Historic Food Safety Legislation to Protect American Consumers

WASHINGTON, DC– Today, Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-Sacramento) voted in favor of the Food Safety Modernization Act, critically important legislation to update food safety laws to better protect American consumers. The legislation, which was passed by the House of Representatives, will expand the resources and authority available to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in order to better ensure the safety of the nation's domestic and imported food supply.

On average, 14 people die each day from eating unsafe food and thousands of others are hospitalized due to foodborne illness. These illnesses take a huge physical, emotional, and financial toll on millions of American families every year. Moreover, foodborne illnesses disproportionately affect certain populations, like children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems.

Recent outbreaks of food-borne illness and nationwide recalls of contaminated food from both domestic and foreign sources highlight the need to modernize and strengthen our nation's food safety system. The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act is a bipartisan plan that provides new food safety tools and updates food safety standards to ensure the safety of our food supply.

“Californians have experienced growing concerns in recent years about the safety of our food supply, and specifically agricultural products,” said Rep. Matsui. “In the Sacramento Valley we are privileged to enjoy locally grown produce, and this legislation is instrumental in helping to prevent food borne illnesses and protect local farmers from detrimental sales losses as a result.”

In passing the Food Safety Modernization Act, Congress is delivering further protections to ensure the safety of American families. Additionally, the food safety bill will add a new focus on prevention and require shared responsibility between FDA and food manufacturers to keep the food supply safe.

“We often assume that we do not have to worry about a hidden threat contained in our meal. Unfortunately, recent events have shown that the globalization of food markets means we must be increasingly vigilant in protecting ourselves from these threats,” said Congresswoman Matsui. “As a grandmother, I know what it is like to worry if a food product is safe while packing

your grandchildren's peanut butter sandwich for school. We have a right to know where the food we buy comes from and if it is safe. Once enacted, this law will bring the FDA standards into the twenty-first century."

Similar food safety legislation was passed in the House in July of 2009. The Senate recently passed the legislation with amendments. Today's legislation fixes some of the drafting errors in the Senate language and sends it back to the Senate for final passage. The legislation is expected to be sent to the President for his signature before the conclusion of the 111th Congress.

Key Provisions of the Food Safety Modernization Act as passed today by the House are as follows:

Improves Capacity to Prevent Food Safety Problems

- **Hazard analysis and preventive controls:** Facilities must identify, evaluate, and address hazards and prevent adulteration via a food safety plan. In certain circumstances, gives FDA access to these plans and relevant documentation.
- **Access to facility records:** Expands FDA access to a registered facility's records in a food emergency.
- **3rd party testing:** Provides for laboratory accreditation bodies to ensure U.S. food testing labs meet high quality standards and, in certain circumstances, requires food testing performed by these labs to be reported to FDA. Allows FDA to enable qualified 3rd parties to certify that foreign food facilities comply with U.S. food safety standards.
- **Imports:** Requires importers to verify the safety of foreign suppliers and imported food. Allows FDA to require certification for high-risk foods, and to deny entry to a food that lacks certification or that is from a foreign facility that has refused U.S. inspectors.

Improves Capacity to Detect and Respond to Food-borne Illness Outbreaks

- **Inspection** –Increases the number of FDA inspections at all food facilities.
- **Surveillance** – Enhances food-borne illness surveillance systems to improve the collection, analysis, reporting, and usefulness of data on food-borne illnesses.
- **Traceability** – Enhances tracking and tracing of high-risk foods and directs the Secretary to establish a pilot project to test and evaluate new methods for rapidly and effectively tracking and tracing food in the event of a food-borne illness outbreak.
- **Mandatory Recall** – Allows FDA to initiate a mandatory recall of a food product when a company fails to voluntarily recall the contaminated product upon FDA's request.
- **Suspension of Registration** – Allows FDA to suspend a food facility's registration if there is a

reasonable probability that food from the facility will cause serious adverse health consequences or death.

Enhances U.S. Food Defense Capabilities – Directs FDA to help food companies protect their products from intentional contamination, and calls for a national strategy to protect our food supply from terrorist threats and rapidly respond to food emergencies.

Increases FDA Resources – Authorizes increased funding for FDA's food safety activities, such as hiring personnel, and includes targeted non-compliance fees for domestic and foreign facilities.

Regulatory Flexibility – Modernizes our food safety system without being burdensome. Provides training for facilities to comply with the new safety requirements and includes special accommodations for small businesses and farms. Exempts small businesses from certain aspects of the produce standards and preventive control requirements.

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